

STRESS- LIFESTYLE MODIFICATION W.S.R. TO CORPORATE WORKERS

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of *Ayurved* is to maintain the health of a healthy person and to treat the diseased one. Healthy balance of the mind and body is given utmost importance in *Ayurved*. This balance is hampered today by the change in life style of man, which is causing a lot of stress. The people working in big private companies may be considered as corporate workers. Due to changed lifestyle of the official workers, they commonly face psychological stress. This stress is mainly caused by the internal pressure to achieve success in goals. Stress may be considered as a major reason in lowering the body's own resistance power and as a result may develop physical and mental ailments. Concepts of *Ayurved*, meditation, *yoga*, physical exercises and a balanced diet may play an important role in relieving stress effectively. Some Ayurvedic preparations has been described by the

ancient *Acharyas* like *Shankhapushpi*, *Bramhi*, *Jatamansi*, *Sarasawatarishta*, *Ashwagandha*. This article is an attempt to analyze the lifestyle modifications for corporate workers with the help of *Ayurved*.

KEYWORDS:- *Ayurved*, *dinacharya*, stress, *Pranayama*, *Shirodhara*.

INTRODUCTION

The *Sutrasthana* of *Charaka Samhita*, a much referred *Ayurved* text, says; "The three—body, mind and soul—are like a tripod, the world stand by their combination; in them everything abides. It is the subject matter of *Ayurved* for which the teachings of *Ayurved* have been revealed. Life is the combination of body, senses, mind and reincarnating soul. *Ayurved* is the most sacred science of life, beneficial to humans both in this world and the world beyond.

In these modern times, the lives of the people working in corporate world are more like machines due to high stress level, demanding schedule i.e. long working hours and poor eating habits. The people working in big private companies may be considered as corporate workers. The types of people that are likely to fall into this category might be CEO's, bankers, investors, and brokers. All these workers whether working as bankers, investors or corporate employees, all are running in their life in order to gain promotions, salary increment etc. But this is hampering their lifestyle leading to lifestyle disorders. Stress may be considered as a major reason in lowering the body's own resistance power and as a result may develop physical and mental ailments.

Lifestyle diseases are symptomatic of everything that is wrong with today's lifestyle. Diseases that are linked with lifestyle choices are known as lifestyle disorders. A lifestyle is the pattern of living that we follow – how we work, what and when we eat, how and when we sleep. In Ayurved, *Tridosh* i.e. *Vata*, *Pitta* and *Kapha* are three important pillars of the human body. Any imbalance in three *Doshas* may lead to stress. In Ayurved, where stress is known as *Sahasa*, *Acharya Charak* has advised to avoid *Sahasa* as it adversely affects the body. *Sahasa* causes *Ojakshaya* which may be responsible for the aetiology of several diseases. Hence *Sahasa* should be avoided as far as possible and body should be protected by taking care of three sub-pillars of Ayurveda i.e. *Traya upastambha* – *Aahar* (Diet), *Nidra* (Sleep) and *Brahmacharya* (celibacy). *Ayurveda* is a life science which provides ways to prevent and manage lifestyle diseases. In the management of lifestyle disorders, *Ayurveda* offers various procedures like *Panchkarma*, *Rasayan* therapies. For maintaining psychological lifestyle, *Sadvritta* and *Aachara Rasayan* play an important role.

Stress

Stress is basic elements of various human diseases and mental illness. Stress is a term that refers to the sum of the physical, mental, and emotional strains or tensions on a person. Stress is the — wear and tear our mind and body experiences as we attempt to cope with our continually changing environment. Stress is also called as anxiety, tension etc. Psychosocial stressor is defined as "any life event or life change that may be associated temporally (and perhaps causally) with the onset, occurrence, worsening of a mental disorder.

Feelings of stress in humans result from interactions between persons and their environment that are perceived as straining or exceeding their adaptive capacities and threatening their

well-being. The element of perception indicates that human stress responses reflect differences in personality as well as differences in physical strength or health.

Stressor

A stressor is defined as a stimulus or event that provokes a stress response in an organism. Stressors can be categorized as acute or chronic, and as external or internal to the organism.

Causes of stress in workers

In today's era, due to changed lifestyle of the official workers, they commonly face psychological stress. It is also called achievement oriented stress which is mostly suffered by younger generation. This stress is mainly caused by the internal pressure to achieve success in goals. It often leads to alcoholism, lack of sleep, and irregular eating habits with diet rich in calories and fat. All this leads to vitiation of both *Vata* and *Kapha doshas*. Eating unhealthy diet, smoking, drinking, may also lead to physical strain. Health Problems related to corporate workers due to stress- Majority of official workers are prone to lifestyle disorders due to poor eating habits, load of work, physical inactivity, and wrong body postures. The major health problems suffered by official workers are

- **Eye inflammation-** It occurs due to extended period of looking at a screen, result in eye strain.
- **Stomach ache-** Sitting down after taking meal causes abdominal content to compress results in slowing the digestion.
- Obesity
- Knee pain
- **Hands pain-** Due to prolonged repetitive small hand movements such as those involved in computer use.
- **Headache** – Mostly tension headache are cervicogenic i.e. from neck and may radiate to neck.
- **Lower back pain** – Sitting for long hours at a fixed position may push pressure on the spine which may result in backache.
- **Wrong seat at the workplace-** Sitting continuously in front of the keyboard may result in enveloping permanently rounded upper back which can cause upper back and neck pain.

How does stress affect you?

The initial stage of arousal remains the same whether we are faced with a major or minor. But under extreme, prolonged, or persistent pressure the body continues to manufacture extra quantities of stress chemicals, triggering further processes to maintain energy. If arousal continues, the adrenal glands manufacture anti-inflammatory chemicals that simultaneously speed tissue repair while depressing the body's immune defense system and if all these changes continue, the body goes on trying to adapt under increasing strain and pressure. Eventually it breaks down. Exhaustion, variety of illnesses and even death may be the outcome of uninterrupted, excessive stress.

Ayurvedic Psychology Charaka in his treatise *Charaka Samhita*, describes eight essential psychological factors that are negatively affected in various ways in all psychiatric disorders. The psychopathological condition is a function of these factors, which are *manas* (mind), *buddhi*, *smriti* (memory), *sajna jnana* (orientation and responsiveness), *bhakti* (devotion), *shila* (habits), *cheshta* (psychomotor activity) and *achara* (conduct). Compared to other major *Ayurvedic* texts like *Sushruta Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridayam*, *Charaka Samhita* gives more emphasis to the view of life as a self-aware field of pure consciousness and natural intelligence where the knower and the known are one. *Ayurved* is very effective for stress management and to encourage body and soul to achieve composure of the mind.

Signs of mental health as per ayurved

Good memory, taking the right food at the right time, awareness of one's responsibilities, awareness of the self and beyond self, maintaining cleanliness and hygiene, doing things with enthusiasm, cleverness and discrimination, being brave, perseverance, maintaining cheerfulness irrespective of the situation, fearlessness in facing situations, sharp intellectual functioning, self-sufficiency, following a good value system and ability to proceed steadfastly against all odds.

Management of stress

Prevention is better than cure, is the first principle of *Ayurved* to maintain the health. There are two approaches to prevent the stress-

1. To avoid factors inducing stress and vitiating *Doshas*.
2. To increase the coping capacity of the body.

Avoiding stress inducing factors is the most ideal approach towards the stress management but it is not the appropriate strategy because stress is an inevitable companion of success. The coping capacity of the body can be increased by lifestyle modifications, dietary interventions and drug treatment. All these are well organized under *Rasayan* therapy.

Achara Rasayana, includes non violence, balanced use of sense organs is advised. It helps in reducing psychological stress.

Lifestyle modification

This can be divided in three headings

1. Modification of Daily Activities
2. Break for vacations and hobbies from routine
3. Relaxation Period

Modification of daily activities

- **Stick to a regular sleep schedule** – A sound sleep of at least eight hours is very essential to keep body fit and proper functioning of the brain.
- Drink water early in the morning so that it can help in eliminating toxins from the body and stimulate peristalsis. Also it helps in preventing dehydration.
- **Abhyanga** – Massaging the body with lukewarm sesame seed oil daily, especially your sole, feet and ears. Sesame oil contains linoleic acid which acts as a good anti-inflammatory agent. On the other hand, lukewarm oil stimulates *Swedavaha Srotas*, dilates blood vessels and increasing circulation, thus relieving pain, stiffness and stress.
- **Exercise and Yoga** – There are some yoga postures like *Ustrasana*, *Bhujangasana*, *Dhanurasana*, which can be helpful in reducing lower back pain and stiffness of the body caused due to hectic schedule of office. Breathing exercises like *Anuloma – Viloma*, *Pranayama* helps in reducing cortisol and adrenalin hormones (stress hormones). Also yoga exercise increases endorphins which act as internal painkiller.
- A daily diet intake should be at proper timing and with proper nutritional balance. Try to avoid oily and spicy meal in your routine. Increase green vegetables, fruits and salads in your meal.
- Avoid excess of tea or coffee during office hours. As caffeine can exaggerate sympathetic adrenal – medullar responses, makes blood pressure rise and spikes levels of adrenalin, both are associated with self reported stress.

- Avoid continuous work at your computer screen and try to take a break away from screen every hour.
- Follow 20/20 rule to avoid the symptoms of eye strain.
- 20/20 rule: After every 20 minutes, you should take a break for at least 20 seconds and look at objects that are 20 feet away from you.
- Practice stretching exercises during office hours like stretching your arms overhead and interlock your fingers.

Break for vacations and hobbies from daily routine

- Take a leave from your work every year for at least two weeks.
- Schedule micro adventures with your family, it will significantly improve your mood throughout the week.
- Indulging in your hobbies, like music, reading, painting etc., great way to escape stress and to open your mind to new ways of thinking.

- **Relaxation period**

- Should go through *Panchkarma* detoxification programme (*Ritushodhan*), once in a year.
- A relaxation period of 7-14days is provided by *Ayurvedic Dhaams*.
- These *Ayurvedic Dhaams* contain some relaxing procedures including Ayurvedic therapies like *Shirodhara*, *Shiroabhyanga*, *Basti* etc.
- Another Ayurvedic therapy i.e. *Nasya* is very much beneficial in reducing the stress and enhances mental clarity.
- ***Nasya karma*** - Ayurvedic acharyas has mentioned *Nasya Karma* as one of the *Pachakarma* in lowering the stress level. *Nasya* has been considered by *Acharyas* as the gateway to *Shira* (head). It cleanses and opens the channels of the head and also improves oxygenation i.e. the flow of *Prana vayu* which is having a direct and beneficial effect on the brain functioning. Also *Nasya* reaches *Shrungataka Marma* (cavernous sinus) through which it reaches ear, nose, eye and head vessels and regulate their physiological functions. It helps in *Indriya Prasadana* (clarity of senses) which leads to clarity of mind.
- ***Shirodhara*** - *Acharya Vagbhata* has mentioned *Shirodhara* as a type of *Murdha Tail* procedure which means continuous pouring of lukewarm oil in a stream over the forehead for 30 to 45 minutes. The oil saturates the forehead and scalp and penetrates into the

nervous system. Due to this gentle pressure of oil body, mind and nervous system experiences a deep state of rest. It reduces depression and rejuvenates central nervous system.

- **Akshitarpana** - In Ayurveda, *Acharya Sushruta* has mentioned *Akshitarpana* or *Netratarpana* as one of the rejuvenating procedure for our eyes. It is an Ayurvedic procedure in which a medicated *Ghee* is retained over the eyes for a specific duration of time. As above mentioned, official workers are prone for eye problems like dry eye, excessive lacrimation, burning sensation in the eyes, blurred vision etc. due to continuous exposure to computer. *Akshitarpana* can help to treat this condition and restore the vision.

It can be helpful in improving the vision clarity and relieve the symptoms of computer vision syndrome.

Medicinal preparations

Ayurveda not only emphasize on reducing the stress level but also focus on the prevention from the lifestyle diseases which can be caused due to the hectic lifestyle of workers. Some Ayurvedic preparations have been described by the ancient *Acharyas* like *Shankhapushpi*, *Bramhi*, *Jatamansi*, *Sarasawatarishta*, *Ashwagandha*.

- *Shankhapushpi* is believed to have cooling and calming effect on the brain which can be very much beneficial for the workers suffering from insomnia, anxiety and gives sound sleep.
- *Bramhi* is another brain tonic which relieve mental stress, and strain.
- *Jatamansi* proves good for nervous system and helps to cure mental diseases like insomnia, memory loss, and hysteria.

CONCLUSION

In *Ayurved* (*Swastha Purusha*) positive health defined as healthy state of body and mind. Stress occurs through emotions such as aggression, impatience, anger, anxiety, and fear, all of which kindle the body's stress responses. Eating an un-healthy diet, smoking, drinking, and taking drugs can also contribute further to physical strain. Thus, *Ayurved*, meditation, *yoga*, physical exercises and balanced diet together play an important role in rejuvenating the health of an individual on physical, mental and emotional level with a combination of benefits like *Panchkarma* therapy, herbal medicines, good *Dinacharya* and nutritious diet.

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